

The Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher  
United States District Judge  
c/o Office of the Federal Public Defender  
100 South Charles Street, Tower II, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Subject: Sentencing of Mark Unkenholz

22 August 2025

Dear Your Honor,

I am writing about Mark Unkenholz. I worked closely with Mark for over 25 years at the National Security Agency, and for the last 12 years (until 2019 when I retired), our offices were indeed right next to each other. Hence, we spent years together with many days and frequent late nights working on common projects, addressing office emergencies, exploring leadership strategies, answering budgetary needs, and helping more junior personnel. While we did not socialize outside of work, Mark and I grew to know each other fairly well and became familiar with each others families, raising our respective children, our hobbies, our values and concerns, etc.

Since approximately 2005, Mark was the Senior Technical Director of the CEC (and its predecessor offices), and I was the Chief of the office in the last 3 years before my retirement. I relied heavily on Mark for his technical expertise, creativity, historical knowledge, and balanced decision making. (Indeed, the senior-most ranks at NSA expressly sought out Mark's judgement and technical decision making.) The mission business of our office was complex and very challenging to navigate important policy, legal, financial and security requirements when engaging with the private sector. This was further complicated since NSA's mission work ranges from unclassified to extremely classified. It required enormous patience and attention to detail, and Mark was very sensitive to these requirements and ensuring that project work done by him or other personnel proceeded in the responsible fashion. At no time in all our years of working together, did I doubt Mark's judgement nor his duty to our nation.

There were numerous examples where Mark had to make hard decisions to turn-off a project, despite its mission importance, because we could not appropriately satisfy all the necessary requirements. And more importantly, there were numerous instances where split-second decisions needed to be made by Mark on particular projects, especially when lives were at stake, further underscoring the gravity and daily pressure of our work and the enormous positive impact that Mark had over the years.

Having worked so closely with Mark on a daily basis for so long, and witnessing first-hand the sacrifices he made in routinely working late hours, giving up time with his family and dedicating his life to the missions of NSA, I know the accusations against him have had a detrimental impact on Mark. He comes from a family of two generations that cherished public service and took pride in contributing to NSA's missions, and sadly this prosecution has permanently stained his reputation and his

life's work. Given his years of professional and emotional investment in NSA, this is very hard to recover from.

Similarly, I'm also concerned that the prosecution of Mark has also distressed and damaged the morale and confidence of current NSA employees back in our old office. Mark was such a pivotal leader for generations of personnel, and employees and managers alike trusted him for advice, expertise, and guidance. They saw daily the sacrifices and dedication by Mark, and they know first-hand how hard the work can be to navigate, so it has been disheartening and painful for them to witness such an extreme impact to a close colleague. No doubt what happened to Mark has undermined their confidence in carrying forward their important national security work.

Your Honor, given Mark's years of dedication as a public servant and his numerous contributions to important missions of NSA, I hope that you will take this into account in your sentencing determinations and urge leniency. I appreciate your consideration of this letter.

Thank You and Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charlotte Knepper", written in a cursive style.

Charlotte Knepper  
(Retired) Senior Executive  
Former Chief, of Industry and Academic Engagement  
(predecessor office to the CEC)